

TESTIMONY of Sue Haynie, Norwalk CT

Issue: Senate Bill 24 –AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

I thank you, Members of the Education Committee, for providing me this opportunity to voice my opinions. My name is Sue Haynie and I am a member of the Norwalk Board of Education, the education reform group R.Ed Apples of Norwalk and a Norwalk public school parent. I am here to support Senate Bill 24 and I strongly urge this committee to pass this bill.

I fully support legislation that raises the bar for teacher preparation programs.

Far too many Connecticut schools of education have done a poor job of self-monitoring and assessing the results of their work. Considering the gravity and urgency of their mission, namely producing the teachers who will teach our children and on whom all our futures depend, this inattention has been costly and unfortunate. Requiring a review of their graduates' skills and effectiveness is a reform whose time has come.

I fully support legislation that reforms teacher tenure laws so that tenure must be earned on the basis of solid practice rather than time on the job. I fully support reforms in tenure law so that student learning would account for a substantial portion of a teacher's evaluation.

Public schools' mission and reason for existence is student learning. Public schools were created to educate our children. This mission must trump adult guarantees that relegate student achievement as secondary to adult job security. Professional development based upon evaluation data that focuses on the individual needs of each teacher will provide the support teachers need to increase student success. The vast majority of teachers have nothing to fear from tenure reform. Tenure as currently designed, however, protects the most ineffective teachers as heartily as it protects the best, allowing this most honorable profession too often to be judged by its weakest links.

I fully support legislation that changes collective bargaining to be in the best interest of raising teacher and school leader quality for improved student achievement.

Again, public schools mission and reason for existence is for student learning. Public schools were created to educate our children. Current collective bargaining rules do not reflect this reality and they do not reflect the voices of children and parents. Current collective bargaining rules have tied the hands of school districts who must work with arcane rules and restrictions that limit a district's ability to increase student achievement and perform competitively.

I fully support expanding the availability of high-quality school models.

Parents need more and better school models that can offer better options for their children. Norwalk is one of Connecticut's 30 lowest-performing districts. The South Norwalk Collegiate Academy is an example of one of these better options. The South Norwalk Collegiate Academy is seeking a charter with the State to address inadequate access to quality education for a subset of Norwalk children, many of whom are the victims of Connecticut's staggering achievement gap.